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Robert W. Lowndes

Editor

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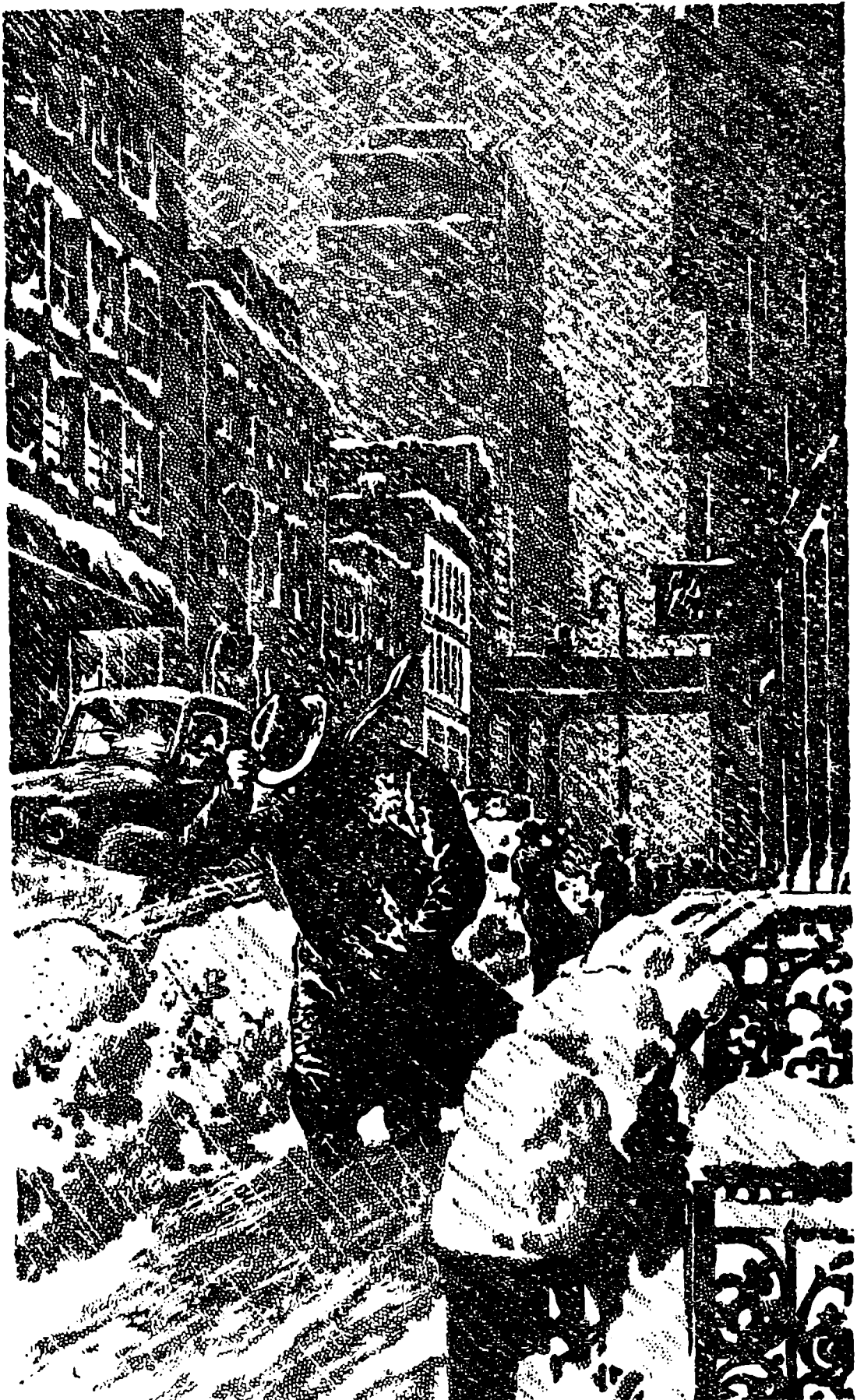
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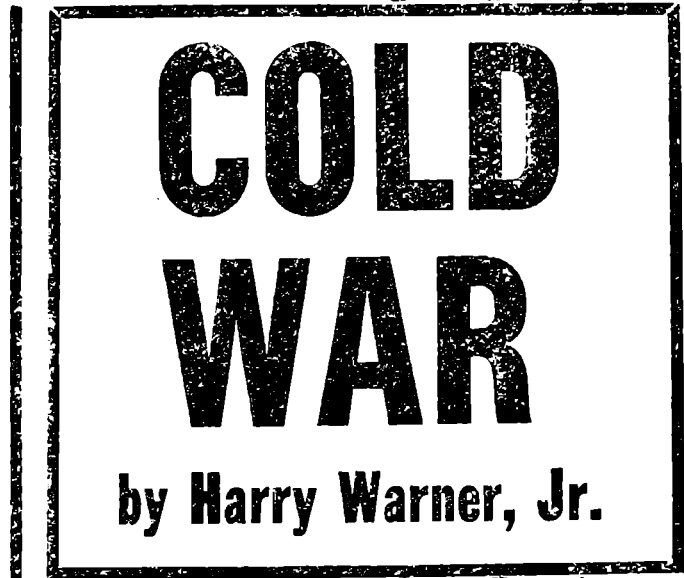
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Snowplows fought their way up the street, and a few pedestrians battled along the sidewalk...

Novelet Of Days To Come

(illustrated by
Paul Orban)



Weather-control was a necessity in these times when arctic temperatures swept over the world and Ted Foreman couldn't understand why his plans weren't even being considered. It all pointed to one conclusion...



THE HOWLING of the wind outside rose above the hum of voices inside the big reception room. His fingers drumming on his knees, Ted Foreman felt the cold creeping through the thick walls and heated air of the International Weather Observers' Chicago headquarters.

"Mr. Foreman?" A black-haired girl, dictation notebook tucked under one arm, stood before him. "The chief will see you now."

Ted followed the girl through a

labyrinth of inner offices. Her trim figure battled for his attention with the fascination of the isobar-filled maps on which technicians were working, the statistics that were pouring in on teletypes, the automatic calculating equipment that was pouring forth data.

"Mr. Foreman, Mr. Clark," the girl said, as they reached an office that was larger than the others.

"Don't go, Miss Cole," Clark said; "you'd better take notes on our conversation."

Ted stole another glance at the girl, then snapped his mind to attention on the authoritative-looking, bespectacled Clark.

"...So if my math is right," Ted finally concluded his long explanation, "we could do something about this climate. If we can just make a start on weather-control procedures, it will start off a cumulative process. Nature would help us. If we broke up some clouds, the sun would get to work on ice; we'd be starting back toward the sort of climate that makes life worth living."

Clark rose, turned his back to Ted, and stared out the window. Snow was beating against the double thickness of glass with silent, persistent fingers. The neighboring skyscraper, only a half-block away, was barely visible through the storm, and the wind continued its persistent, unsatisfied whine. Finally Clark turned back.

"You might as well go and start transcribing your notes," he told the girl. She snapped the notebook shut, and disappeared back into the labyrinth.

"It would take a long time to check your math, young man," Clark said, again sitting down. "But you've overlooked two very important things."

Ted pressed his lips tightly together, feeling that this was a decisive moment.

"The first thing," Clark ticked it off on his fingers, "is that you're not

the first person to have the idea that weather-control might be possible as an antidote for this perpetual arctic climate. I'd estimate that we get the suggestion a hundred times a month."

Ted pointed to the thick sheaf of papers he had just been exhibiting. "You mean that my calculations just duplicate..."

CLARK INTERRUPTED. "You've gone further than most people; most of the letters we get just suggest starting mammoth fires, or something equally ridiculous. But you're overlooking something else.

"Number two, our organization is strained to the very limit to do the work to which it is assigned already. We can't spare the men to tackle any weather-control theories; if we did, our predictions and analyses would suffer. You know what that would mean—more famine than we have now, because of crop failures; another cut-back on transportation; a dozen other things. Even though we're supported by all the big governments in the world, the governments can't afford to give us more money or more men. They're having a hard enough time keeping us going at our present size, with the world's economy disrupted by the change in the climate."

"But it wouldn't be such a big job to test out my theories," Ted insisted. "I've got documentary evidence that there was pioneer weather-control work done years ago, back in the 1940's."

"Documentary evidence?" Clark leaned forward, suddenly alert.

"I found a couple of references to cloud-seeding and rain-making in an old reference-book in a second-hand store. Funny thing—I hunted up later editions of the book, and they left out all mention of those experiments."

"I'd like you to send me that book," Clark said. "I'm very much interested in it." Then he stood up.

"You aren't interested in anything else from me?"

"I'm afraid not. Good day."

Ted yanked the zipper on his briefcase shut viciously, slammed his hat onto his head, and resisted the impulse to hurl the briefcase at Clark. He was striding out of the office when Clark's voice came from behind him: "You'll never find your way out of this maze; ask Miss Cole to show you out."

Not turning around, Ted waited a moment until the girl slipped to his side. Her pencil was stuck behind her ear, and she looked at him anxiously: "Any luck?"

"No, and that's an understatement." Grim-faced, Ted walked beside her, retracing their previous confusing route. "He told me that I'm an extra-smart crackpot."

"I'm so sorry," the girl said in low, sympathetic tones. "I'll bet my old boss would have given you more consideration."

"Did they send him to Siberia for suggesting the use of blue pencils, instead of red pencils, to mark weather maps?"

"Well, he used to have the job that Mr. Clark holds. But—all of a sudden they transferred him to the Cape Cod observatory. That's just about as cold and icy as Siberia used to be."

Clutching at straws, Ted suggested: "If you think it would do any good, maybe you'd give me his name and address and I could write to him."

"His name is Dr. Hermann Dietrich," the girl told him. They were back in the reception room by now. "But it wouldn't do any good to write to him. Your letter would be referred back to here by his secretary before he even saw it, because it concerns experimentation—and that's not in his division."

They stood by the reinforced glass window, watching snowplows fight their way up a wide Chicago street like tiny toys, twenty stories below. Here and there an ant-like person

battled his way desperately along the sidewalk, battling the gale and knee-to-waist-deep snow.

"Look," the girl whispered. "I can forge you a pass into the Cape Cod observatory, if you're willing to go to the trouble of getting there. I have a feeling that Dr. Dietrich might be interested, if you can see him personally."

"You've never seen me before," Ted said, looking straight into her eyes. Her gaze held his for a long moment. "Why do you want to do this for me?"

"I guess I just like to help young men with good ideas," she replied after a brief pause. "Wait here." She scurried away.

Ted returned to the chair he had occupied a half-hour earlier, wishing he had asked about her first name.

TED REMEMBERED, as a boy, when autos still ran all winter in Chicago. But that was before the climatic changes had reached their peak. Back in his boyhood, airplanes flew in January; people ventured out without earmuffs in February; and below-zero readings were rarities.

But as Ted grew up, the climate grew worse. After the North American temperature averages had gradually climbed during the first half of the 20th century, the world's climate had taken a turn for the worse—before the 1950's were ended. Sensational Sunday-supplement articles about the approach of a new ice age had given Ted an interest in the weather that he had never lost.

By 1965, Chicago had winters when snow covered the ground without a break from early November until mid-April. The last major airline ended its regular schedules in North America, five years later, because of storms nine months in the year. Two of the ten years that followed 1970 resulted in world-wide famines, because of crop failures.

The United States had been luckier

than the rest of the world. Europe and Asia, still recovering from war's effects, had barely avoided mass starvation. Improvements in hydroponics, and advances in the science of nutrition, had kept most of the people alive.

The war—which had threatened to engulf the entire world during the '50's—was forgotten by the '70's, as the nations converted munition plants to greenhouses, and drafted young men and women to labor in the fields during the shortened summer. No army could have marched through the ice and bitter cold during most of the year, in any event.

The United Nations, turning its attention from dope-addiction and disarmament, had gone to work on the fight against the weather's effects. The International Weather Observers was the new organization that had resulted, fighting a losing action against the inexorable advance of the ice-caps that were creeping southward through Canada and northern Europe.

As a schoolboy, Ted had taken temperature readings every day, comparing them with the official reports the following day. In college, weather had become a full-fledged hobby, with emphasis on efforts to predict the coming day's weather more accurately than the IWO. In his spare time as a hydroponics engineer, he had developed revolutionary theories about the possibility of man's changing the climate back to more temperate conditions.

A LONG HOUR passed before the girl returned. Ted's eyes widened when he saw that she was bundled into the fur-lined overcoat that was now standard street wear for women. "Quitting time, Miss Cole?" he asked.

"It's Carla Cole," she replied, rapidly. "Button up your coat and pull up your boots; I'm going to have to tag along with you to the railroad station."

Ted clambered into his clumsy, thick coat, pulled the hood down over

his head, and snapped fast the buckles on his hip boots. Carla explained in guarded tones as they rode the elevator: "I got into hot water quick. One of the supervisors happened to see me typing out a pass into the Cape Cod observatory for you. He started to ask questions, and then I realized that I'd forgotten something very important. Just one person is never given a pass into the place; it's always two people—one of them from the IWO if the other is an outsider. The supervisor was sitting there watching me, so the only thing to do was include myself on the pass. I told the supervisor that Mr. Clark had ordered it that way. And when Mr. Clark hears what I've done—" She made a very wry face.

Ted opened the huge double-door of the building, and they walked out into the street. A sweep of super-chilled gale clutched them, the instant they left the lee of the building. Carla staggered at the force of the grasp of the wind, and Ted grabbed her around the waist, to keep her on her feet.

"It's worse than ever today!" she shouted in his ear, above the whine of the gale. They bowed their heads and began to inch their way forward down the street, keeping close to the protection of the building.

"You'd better go back," Ted suggested.

"It'll be stormier indoors!" she said. "No, I'll go along to the station with you; if they've put out a stop order on the transportation, I have credentials that might get you on the train."

"What'll happen to you after that?" Ted asked.

"We'll worry about that when we come to it."

TED'S HOTEL was only two blocks away, but they felt as if they had trudged for miles when they finally reached it. Carla sank exhausted into a chair in the lobby while Ted grabbed his valise, checked out, then accompanied her to the railroad station. It was a mile away, but down-

wind and easier walking. The snow was less than a foot deep most of the way.

Ted and Carla threw back their hoods and loosened their coats in the railroad station, which seemed warm even though the rules about fuel conservation kept its temperature down to 60. Then Carla headed for a telephone-booth. Through its glass panel, Ted could see her lips pucker into concentrated lines, then her eyes narrowed in worry. She finally emerged, somewhat subdued: "I tried to get through to the Cape Cod observatory; I thought that I might talk to Dr. Dietrich and tell him the truth. He's a fine man, and I think he'd let you in. But he's out at a sub-station somewhere where there isn't a phone for the outside lines."

"Let's wait until he comes back, then," Ted suggested. "There's no hurry."

"Yes, there is." Carla produced an official-looking document from her purse. "This pass is good only for this afternoon's train. It involves transportation to the observatory, entrance into the observatory, and everything else. If you don't use it properly it's worthless."

Ted studied the pass, then decided: "I'll go, anyway. Maybe you can get hold of Dietrich before I reach Cape—"

Carla's fingers clutching his arm hard interrupted him. She pulled at his arm in the direction of a gate.

"Come on," she whispered. "We've got to get aboard the train; that supervisor just came in and he's looking for me."

Ted followed the tattoo of her feet across the concrete of the station floor. A moment later, they were aboard.

"I can't face that man now," Carla said desperately. "If he looks for me on the train, I'll hide somewhere. You keep the pass out of sight so that he doesn't spot you; he doesn't know your face."

But the train pulled out before the supervisor came in sight.

"I've needed a vacation for a long time," Carla said ruefully, "and it looks like I'm getting one now."



THE TRAIN fought its way eastward all night. Sitting bolt upright in the uncomfortable seats of the day coaches, Ted and Carla tried to catch sleep. Austerity regulations had long ago done away with pullman service on railroads.

Time after time, the train's wheels shrieked in an upward keening, as the train stuck on iced rails or snowdrifts. Each time, there was a delay until the special crew, equipped with flame-throwers, cleared the way. The temperature aboard the train dipped to the freezing-point, because the fight against the icy rails cut the power available for the train's heating units.

Nearly two days later, the train halted to let Ted and Carla off at a tiny station that was its closest approach to the observatory.

No one was on duty in the station, and the scene around resembled a cartoon of pioneer days in Siberia. There was a layer of snow on the ground, reaching almost to Ted's shoulders. Leafless trees stuck up in dead-looking fashion through the snow.

They struggled to fit snowshoes over their hip boots, then clambered up steps that had been cut into the packed snow at the edge of the rails, and found a snowtaxi that had apparently been left for just such unexpected travelers.

"You just cut across the fields, and keep the high hill to your left," the friendly conductor aboard the train had explained to them. "The observatory is so big that you'll find it even if you got a couple of miles off course."

Ted helped Carla into the cramped single seat of the snowtaxi, climbed behind the controls, and gingerly tested the jets. They weren't smooth, but the skeleton-like snow vehicle leaped ahead willingly with a jerk that nearly threw him from the seat.

"A fine driver you are," Carla laughed; "I'm glad you don't have to go up any mountains."

Ted, struggling with the controls, had no time to answer. It was his first experience with one of these snowtaxis, whose flaming rear-jets made them impossible for city use, but represented the only fast travel method in rural regions. The snowtaxi insisted on moving faster than he liked, and its skis constantly skidded giddily sideways, throwing them down grades and off course.

"I don't like the looks of that sky," Ted muttered. "It would be easy to get lost out here if it started to snow."

"Don't worry. You won't get a speeding ticket." Suddenly Carla's voice sobered. "Isn't it awful out here, though?"

The land might have been the Antarctic, except for the cable-carrying pole that occasionally poked out of the snow, a rare abandoned farmhouse built before the climate made this area unlivable in the winter, and a few trees.

"Over there," Carla pointed with a pudgy, gloved hand. "Isn't that part of the observatory?"

TED SQUINTED at a black tower that arose behind a snow dune, then shifted the course of the snowtaxi slightly toward it. "It looks like it," he said. "I didn't think they'd need towers so high, though."

"It looks like one of those towers you drew a picture of on your plans."

"Damned if it doesn't. It might be a radio relay-station, or something."

Ted jammed desperately on the rudder of the snowtaxi as a fence loomed up suddenly before them, ghost-like and almost invisible for lack of contrast between its pale, heavy wire and the snow fields.

"*'Blow, blow, thou winter wind,'*"

Carla hummed nervously as they followed the fence. They might have gone a mile when little lights began to twinkle in the distance. Ted slowed the snowtaxi, as the lights neared and a gate became visible.

"No one's allowed inside," a huge guard in IWO uniform, bars on his shoulders, said. The guard shivered a little, looked longingly at the little kiosk from which he had emerged, but stood solidly before the closed gate. "You'll have to keep moving."

"We're expected," Ted lied fumbling with gloved fingers to get the credentials from a pocket.

The guard looked at the papers, went inside the kiosk, and used the telephone. When he emerged, the gate began to swing open. "Take it slow," he warned. "The inner works start about a half mile inside this fence. They're so well camouflaged that you might ram them without seeing them."

Throttling down the snowtaxi to minimum speed, Ted and Carla watched wonderingly as they headed toward a long, low line of buildings. More towers poked up on the more distant horizon, circular structures like enormous igloos stood to their left and right, and there were tracks of vehicles crisscrossing everywhere on the snow.

"What in the world do they do with all those buildings and towers and things?" Carla asked. "Are they filled with thermometers?"

"It's got me beat," Ted said, wanting to scratch his head, but fearing frostbite. "I think I know something about weather-recording methods, but I don't see why they'd need all that stuff."

Again he braked violently the snowtaxi, just in time to avoid collision with a new fence that loomed up before them. This one was made of wood, painted to blend perfectly with the snow, and was a dozen feet tall.

A barred gate was only a hundred yards away. They stopped there.

"What do we do now?" Ted won-

dered. "There's no horn on this contraption." There was no sign of life around the gate, no guard-sheltering kiosk.

"Yell," Carla suggested. They did, Ted's baritone blending with Carla's soprano.

FINALLY a panel swung open in the center of the gate. The head and shoulders of a fur-clad man poked through. The tip of a rifle barrel was visible in his hands.

"We're here to see Dr. Dietrich," Ted told him, shoving the pass under his nose.

"Identification papers, please," the guard demanded.

"I have mine; I'm with the IWO. Mr. Foreman is a weather expert," Carla countered.

"This place is restricted to IWO people," the guard insisted. "You can come in," and he pointed to Carla. "He can't."

"But I have important information for Dr. Dietrich," Ted argued.

"No exceptions." The guard started to swing shut the panel.

"What do you expect me to do?" Ted demanded.

The gate swung open slightly and the guard poked his head through the opening. "You, buster, can go over the snow to grandmother's house, for all I care." A thick arm shot out, grabbed Carla around the waist, and pulled her inside the fence. The gate snapped shut as Ted darted toward it. There was a loud, final click, and Carla's protesting voice dying away in the distance.

Ted pounded on the high barrier with his fists, tried to pry open the panel, and shouted. There was no response.

Beating his hands together to try to keep warm, he felt his temper boiling up to the danger point. He wasn't going to leave Carla to face the music alone; and he wasn't going to leave this place until he learned exactly what all those towers and igloos did.

Ted tried to build a rampart with

the snow to permit climbing over the wall. But the snow was too dry and powdery; it crumbled, each time that he neared the top of the barrier, collapsing and almost burying him.

Then, as the sun sank, Ted drove the snowtaxi slowly around the entire wall. It was a circular journey that took perhaps an hour. The vehicle had no speedometer, but Ted estimated the circumference at ten miles, at least. He yelled each time he passed a gate, and was ignored.

Light was beginning to fail, but Ted wanted to try something before giving up and going back to the outer wall. He selected a spot which was directly between two large cluster of towers. Then he stopped, jumped out of the snowtaxi, and began to dig clumsily into the banked snow, with his padded gloves. Miniature avalanches of snow attempted to fill the hole as fast as he scooped it out. But he gave a satisfied grunt, four feet down.

Huge cables, thick as his arm, were uncovered by his excavations. They ran close to the ground, wrapped in thick insulation, obviously carrying a heavy power load between the towers.

Ted climbed out of his ditch with effort, bewildered. He was no power-engineer, couldn't guess at the power that would be carried by cables of such size; but he knew that such giant amounts of juice would be useless for mere recording and observing instruments.

He knew that this weather station was more than it was supposed to be. Some project of unknown nature was being conducted here.

THE SUN had eased down behind a snowy hill, and the temperature was becoming perceptibly lower. Ted's hands and feet felt as if he had received injections of novocain in each limb. Already the outlines of the mysterious structures were blurring with approaching night.

Suddenly a multi-colored brilliance appeared on the snow around Ted.

He wheeled, and stared at the spectacle in the northern sky. Giant waves of color, reddish and yellowish, flowed out of the north, silently bursting as they neared the zenith, then coming back in new tidal waves of color.

"The northern lights!" Ted told himself. Reading about them was one thing; seeing them was something awesome. They were infinitely brighter these years than they had been before the climate worsened. But Ted had never seen them in open country, undiluted by city lights.

"There's nothing to do standing out here," he told himself. "If I can get to a town, maybe I can get into this place by phone. . ."

But when he wheeled the snowtaxi, preparing to return, Ted found himself in a new world. The northern lights, reflecting from the snowfields, made it impossible to say where the horizon lay. The aurora now covered the entire city. The huge fence seemed to run in all directions, moving like a living thing in the shifting, unnatural light. Ted drove a few hundred yards, in what might have been the direction to the outer fence. Then he stopped, confused.

His numbed hands could barely control the vehicle, and he no longer was certain in which direction lay the invisible outer and inner walls. He felt a moment's panic, and pounded an unfeeling fist against the throttle of the snowtaxi; it darted off like a bullet. Stubbornly refusing to yield to an impulse to turn, he held his course for ten full minutes. He encountered nothing but weirdly colored snow and once a ghostly pole that loomed suddenly before him and flashed by, only feet away.

"I've got to stop and think," he told himself, braking recklessly. If he'd collided with that pole, it would have taken two men to pick up the pieces. "Ten minutes should have brought me to one wall or the other, if I was going straight. So this thing is probably skidding enough to cause me to go in circles. I could pass within fifty feet

of a guard and not see him in this glare."

He forced himself to sit stock still and try to think. The sudden quiet was strangely soothing. He sank into a lassitude in which he didn't even think. A little warning voice within his brain tried to signal the rest of his body: *This is the feeling that comes over a person who is freezing to death.*

SINKING into reverie, Ted wished only one thing: that all his work on the weather control possibilities hadn't been in vain. Drowsily, he reflected that it would be ridiculous for the man who had decided to change the climate to fall a victim to a chilly Massachusetts night.

As if he were watching an actor on the stage, Ted realized that he was forcing his arm under his heavy coat, groping with stiffened fingers for his cigarette-lighter. He touched it, but he could not force his mitten to pull it out; it slithered like a live eel into the depths of his pocket.

Clenching his teeth, Ted worked his fingers out of the mitten. Even under the coat, the cold pounced on the bare flesh greedily, and its sharp bite snapped Ted back to full awareness. Convulsively, he clenched the lighter and pulled his hand out to full exposure.

The hand was purplish and looked lifeless. But with his other hand, Ted forced a thumb down onto the button. A tiny tongue of flame appeared at the light's wick, paled by the aurora's glow. Instantly Ted eased the lighter down to the seat of the snowtaxi. The flame wavered, almost went out, then licked at a shred of torn upholstery. It spread over the upholstery like ink spilled on a blotter. Ted half-tumbled out of the little vehicle, an instant before its interior became a mass of flame.

Crouching in the snow beside the snowtaxi, he prayed that the heat would be sufficient to ignite the fuel. Its welcome warmth increased, then faded as the upholstery was consumed.

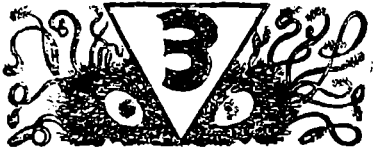
But a *whoosh*, and a brighter, steadier column of flame signaled the ignition of the fuel supply.

New pain swept through Ted's half-frozen body, as the warmth penetrated it. It took the last dregs of his will-power to remain close to the burning vehicle, knowing that the numbing absence of sensation would return if he moved a few feet more distant into the treacherous cold.

Thanking the scientists who had made jet fuel non-explosive, only a couple of years ago, Ted estimated that he had a half-hour to live. When the fuel was exhausted, the flames would die out; there was nothing to burn on this snowless plain.

But the flame was still bright when a new, artificial light came shining across the snow. Ted saw a combination of snowplow and station wagon moving into his direction. It stopped in a cloud of blood-colored snow. Ted felt himself lifted into its cheerfully lighted interior, then blacked out.

"Good thing they spotted that fire from the tower," the driver told the attendant as they drove toward the inner wall.



THE JABBING of a needle into his arm brought Ted back to half-consciousness. Dream-like voices were talking about him, with frequent references to "authority" and "unauthorized" entrance. He forced his eyes open, and a white-uniformed, elderly man with a hypodermic swam out of the dizzy mists.

"I guess I'd better say thanks to someone," Ted muttered drowsily. "Who do I see about it?"

The doctor waved his hands vaguely. "All I know is, they were already alerted for a prowler, and then someone saw a light out there. Old Man

Dietrich got excited and sent out searching parties."

Ted winced as he sat up. His joints felt as if they had been borrowed from Rip Van Winkle, but the agonizing ache of the cold had been driven away by the injections. He stretched cautiously, then suddenly thought of something: "That briefcase... I pulled it out of the snowtaxi. Did they find that, too?"

As if he had pronounced a magic formula, the door opened and a shriveled little man bobbed into the infirmary, briefcase in hand.

"We thought you'd be looking for this," the little man said. He waved his hand in dismissal to the doctor, who gathered up his needles and left. "Do you feel well enough to leave us?"

"I guess so," Ted said, standing up, and hoping the room would stop describing circles. "Are you Dr. Dietrich?"

"No, I'm Mason, just an assistant. He wanted me to tell you that your plans are very interesting, but your basic ideas have been suggested many times before; he fears they're impractical."

"What does he know about my ideas? Have I been raving while I was out?"

"The girl explained all that to him while you were being treated; she did an excellent propaganda job."

Ted yanked a sheaf of papers out of the briefcase, saying: "But she couldn't have shown you how my calculations run. You see, so much energy expended here would have enough effect on natural forces to multiply itself..."

"No, no," Mason interrupted. "I have no authority even to listen. Dr. Dietrich has already made his decision, and he's the boss; you'll have to come this way."

Ted resignedly picked up his fur jacket and boots, and followed Mason into a long hallway, feeling less tottery. His eyes searched the side passages, catching tantalizing glimpses of giant machinery bulking in the dis-

tance. Men armed with charts and data sheets were scurrying everywhere.

"I'm afraid that you'll have to let me blindfold you from this point forward," Mason said, producing a black cloth. "You're really fortunate to be allowed out of here without a jail-sentence; it was accidental that you got inside, so we'll be lenient."

Anger flashed into Ted's face and he backed away from Mason. "No, you don't," he warned. "I'm not a spy in a military installation, and you're not going to hide anything from me. Where's Miss Cole, anyway? I've got to see her."

"She's already left; we escorted her out an hour ago. She didn't say where she would wait for you."

TED REFUSED to budge from the spot, and his hand clenched into a fist when Mason raised the blindfold again.

"Do you want me to call the guards and use force?" Mason asked. "I'm a busy man and we have rules here."

"Look," Ted said, suddenly lowering his voice to a confidential tone. "Not as an official but as a man of science—don't you think that all this equipment here could be converted to the purpose that I'm fighting for? I've seen enough already around here to know that you have more than just an observatory here. Now, if you promised to look seriously into my idea, I'd not raise much of a stink on the outside about the danger of other nations boring into the United States through secret weapons at what's supposed to be an observatory."

"You're crazy!" Mason flared up. "You're so wrong. You'll never convince anyone in authority of that because it isn't true. Now, put on this blindfold, or you might not get back outside again—"

Red lights suddenly flashed from concealed places in the walls, and two burly men in uniform came dashing down the corridor to them.

"The girl's lost!" one of them

cried, out of breath. "She jumped out of the snowtaxi, halfway to the station; she was out of sight before we could get out the searchlights."

Ted's stomach turned over at the thought of Carla undergoing the agonies of the arctic cold. Mason paled, and ordered: "Get flares, quick. And guns. Who else can help to search?"

"No one's available," the other man said. "We checked that before coming here. That storm-center over eastern Canada needs so much attention that all the men are—"

"Shut up!" Mason turned to Ted, and snapped: "Do you feel well enough to help hunt?"

Ted nodded. Surprisingly spry, Mason made a dash down the corridor, the blindfold forgotten. Ted followed him at a run, paying no attention to the bulletin boards and offices that lined the walls.

Someone thrust a rifle into Ted's hands at the outer gate and helped him to fasten his heavy clothing. Mason was ordering: "Turn on the neon tubing all along the fences."

A guard at the gate pulled a switch obediently. Then Ted was clambering into a snowtaxi, larger than one he had burned, and Mason was instructing him: "It's still four hours to dawn. This snowtaxi leaves a luminous trail on the snow that will show you the way back until dawn, and the lights on the fence will help you keep your bearings. There's just about enough fuel to last until dawn. Come back when the sun's rising, even if you haven't found her."

FOLLOWING instructions, Ted kept the snowtaxi's compass on a red mark, between southeast and east, to reach the outer gate. He was not even forced to slow at that gate, the guard swinging it open as he sped up.

Ted could see the phosphorescent-like trail that the snowtaxi had made on its previous trip out, when it had started to take Carla to the station. He followed the thin lines, straining his eyes as the northern lights

flared and dimmed the marks on the snow. Through the rear view mirror, he could follow the brighter trail that his own vehicle was leaving.

Ted wondered about the purpose of the gun, while following the trail. Did the men in the station think that highwaymen might kidnap Carla in the middle of this wilderness?

The trail he was following suddenly veered sharply, about five miles out; that would be the point at which Carla had escaped from her escort. Ted braked the vehicle, clambered cautiously out, and looked around. His eyes had accustomed themselves slightly to the weird light of the aurora, and his body was warmed by the heated vehicle.

"What would I do if I were trying to shake off those men, like Carla?" Ted asked himself. Hiding would be her first thought, he believed. But there wasn't any promising hiding-place amid the gently-rolling snowfields.

Ted climbed back in the vehicle, began to cruise about slowly, playing the searchlight in every direction, and leaving a brilliant flare at the point of Carla's escape. It took him only a minute to find the footprints.

They were made by boots, and must be Carla's, he realized. He shouted her name a couple of times, but everything around was silent.

Ted followed the footprints carefully, leaning out of the side door of the vehicle to watch them. Smaller markings ran alongside of them, and Ted wondered where Carla had found a stick in this wilderness to help her progress.

The bootprints were growing larger now, but more of the smaller marks were joining them, myriads of them.

Suddenly above the noise of the wind he heard a human's voice. It was a shout, desperate and lonely.

Ted shouted back: "Carla! I'm coming!" The frigid air pained his throat as he yelled.

The distant voice responded, end-

ing in a shriek. The trail was twisting now, and the vehicle was skidding in the effort to follow it. Ted cut off the jets, leaped out, and plunged into the snow to follow the track on foot.

"Where are you?" He yelled back. A new noise replied and a small figure was racing over the snow toward him.

"Carla!" Ted shouted. Then the name died in his throat. The figure wasn't Carla; it was an animal that snarled and leaped at his throat.

TED TWISTED violently and the fangs raked the fur of his coat. The animal tumbled into a snowdrift, inches away, and rolled to its feet, tensing for a new leap. As it sprang, Ted realized that it was a wolf.

He swung the rifle barrel viciously, catching the wolf full in the face. It yelped, rolled in the snow, and Ted clubbed it to death.

"Where are you, Carla?" he shouted, cocking the rifle.

"Up here!" came an answer from above him. "Look out! Behind you!"

Ted wheeled; another wolf was racing toward him. He fired, missed in the uncertain light, then pulled the trigger again and the animal rolled at his feet.

A tree poked through the ground near him. Ted ran to it, and looked up, Carla's coat was ghost-like against the sky's unnatural light.

"Drop, I'll catch you," he shouted.

"Oh, Ted," she moaned, half-climbing, half-falling to the ground. "The wolves almost caught me; I was getting numb up there, and thought I was going to let go."

Supporting her with one arm, keeping the rifle ready with the other, Ted helped her to the snowtaxi. As they reached it, a chorus of yelps broke out on the horizon. Ted paled as a mass of gray forms dashed toward them. He tossed Carla into the snowtaxi, jumped in after her, slammed the door, and turned on full power to the jets. The vehicle wheeled crazily, cut across the

very path of the pack, then outdistanced them rapidly.

Carla recovered rapidly in the vehicle's heated interior.

"I jumped out of that thing because I thought we were close to a town, and I wanted to try to get help for you," she explained. "Then I realized that I was lost, and the wolves came."

"They must live on garbage and scraps from the observatory," Ted answered. "There's certainly nothing else out here."

He cruised about until he picked up his luminous trail, then followed it back to the station. The sky was brightening with the normal light of dawn when they zoomed through the outer gate unmolested. As they approached the inner fence, Ted asked: "Do you feel strong enough for some more trouble?"

"I'm all right." Carla smiled. "Are you expecting more?"

"I'm going to cause more," Ted said grimly; "hang on tight."

He pushed viciously at the throttle. The snowtaxi pushed ahead violently as they approached the inner gate. It swung open barely in time to avoid a crash.

Ted braked and swerved at the last possible moment, as they came to a long, low building. The vehicle darted along the side of the structure, hugging its dark wall.

"I'm sure of one thing," Ted told Carla. "This place isn't just an observatory. It doesn't look like a military installation, but there's no telling what this IWO really conceals. I'm starting to suspect that they're bluffing me about my weather-control ideas. I think they're already controlling the weather, right here at this observatory!"

Carla stared at him. "You mean that someone is causing this new ice age?"

"Yes. I don't know whether it's a fifth column that wants to weaken this country; or the antics of a bunch of weather-experts who want to become world dictators—or what. But it all

fits in. The way I got the runaround with my ideas; changes in all the scientific publications to leave out all references to experiments with weather-control in the current editions; the secrecy around this place."

"Then we'd better get out of here before we're caught, and tell people on the outside what's going on."

"I want proof, first; some kind of documents. Maybe we can kidnap someone working here who is willing to spill the beans. See that porch down there?"

CARLA LOOKED at the projection from the building, and nodded.

"I'm stopping there. They don't have much of a protection-force inside the walls, and probably won't know where we are just now. We may be able to wander around indoors for a little while before they spot us."

The two crawled stiffly from the vehicle and crept toward the steps. It was full dawn now.

This door opened to their touch. But as they walked through, a guard in a blue and gold uniform woke from a doze in a chair beside the door, and tugged at his holster.

Ted leaped. His fist met the guard's chin as the guard's weapon was leveling toward them. The guard collapsed, moaned once, then lay still.

"Tear some strips from his shirt and tie him," Ted ordered, pocketing the pistol. Looking around, he saw no other sign of life in the big office where they stood. It contained desks, and an enormous switchboard.

Ted shoved the bound, gagged guard into a dark corner behind the switchboard. Then, revolver in pocket but one hand on it, he led Carla to the inner corridor.

The long corridor was only dimly lighted and empty of men. Ted suspected that this might be a barracks for the station's personnel, accounting for its quietness at this hour.

Two hundred feet down the corridor, he found what he wanted. An

elevator was set into the wall, its door open. They entered.

"Look at that control-panel," Ted pointed. "This building is only a couple of stories high above the ground, and there are a dozen floors to choose from. This thing must go down pretty deep; we might find the heart of this layout."

He punched the bottom knob. The elevator sank noiselessly; when its door opened again, an unbelievable sight was revealed.

STRETCHING before them for hundreds of yards were giant machines that might have come from gargantuan power-plants. The air was heavy with the scent of ozone. Over-all-clad workmen moved rapidly but noiselessly, tending the machines on rubber soles. Lights flashed on machines and control panels like a forest of Christmas trees.

"We've hit the jackpot," Carla breathed, staying close to Ted as they emerged from the elevator. "This must be the power-plant."

Ted forced himself to stop staring like a yokel at the machinery. "Act as if you're used to being down here," he told Carla. "It's a good thing that only the guards wear uniforms in this place; we might not be spotted until we learn some things."

They walked confidently through the maze of mountainous equipment, the workmen looking curiously at Carla but ignoring Ted. Ted halted before an instrument panel.

"If I only had a camera!" He pointed to the names on the panel.

Toronto, Norfolk, Atlanta, a dozen other major cities of the continent were listed. Beside each was a temperature, a barometric reading, a humidity figure, and wind data, together with a date. Each date was three days in the future.

Carla tugged Ted to another panel. "Look at this one," she breathed. It was a twin of the other, but the dates were four days in the future.

"They can't be forecasting equipment," Ted said; "they'd be built like calculators. These look more like powerhouse-controls. They're weather-control machines!"

"Ah, there you are!" a voice said behind them. Ted started, and his hand shot to the pocket containing the gun.

"I'm Dr. Dietrich," the tall, slender man with iron-gray hair said as Ted turned. "Hello, Carla," he added.

Ted pulled the revolver half out of his pocket, then shoved it back inside. "Take us to your office. Quick, and don't signal anyone."

Dr. Dietrich looked for a long moment at Ted's grim face, glanced uncertainly at Carla, then shrugged his shoulders.

"It's this way," he told Ted, threading a path between the machines. "But you're being very foolish; you can't get out of here, because the place is alerted."

"I'll worry about that later," Ted replied.



THE OFFICIAL led them on an interminable trip through the vast underground building. Carla, looking frightened, whispered to Ted: "This place must run for acres."

"It's tunneled under the countryside," Dr. Dietrich replied, as if he were a guide for sightseers. "Only the two upper stories are above the surface. Ah, here we are."

He paused before a kiosk-like structure that stood in a cleared space, like a lonely tepee on a prairie. Ted motioned him inside.

"Keep your hands in plain sight, and sit down," Ted ordered, once inside. Ted looked around curiously. A switchboard with dozens of jacks

stood on the desk that occupied the room's center. Charts on rollers, most of them opened, lined the walls. The charts were covered with the waving lines and symbols of weather maps that Ted knew so well. A few filing cabinets completed the furnishings.

"I have living-quarters upstairs, you understand," Dr. Dietrich said in friendly fashion. "Now, may I ask precisely what you intend?"

"You're controlling the weather from this place," Ted said.

"Ah—are you making a statement, or asking a question?" the official replied. "You seem to know enough about control possibilities to make it useless for me to lie. This is the central control-station for this hemisphere."

"Why are you doing such a thing?" Carla burst out, eyes flashing. "When I worked for you, you seemed like the nicest person in the world. Now you're bringing mystery to the whole world by doing things to the climate."

"I want you to dictate a statement telling the truth to Carla," Ted ordered. "Sign it, stamp it with the IWO seal, then get us out of here safely."

"If I don't?"

"Then I'll shoot my way out, and I can still cause you people a lot of trouble outside, even without a signed statement."

"All right." Dr. Dietrich pointed to the desk. "I'll talk slowly enough for you to type what I say, Carla."

"It's really very simple," the official began. "Of course, I wouldn't be explaining this to you if I thought you'd carry the information to the outside world."

"This is one of a chain of weather-control stations, big and little, throughout the world. The weather experts learned quite a while ago how to do more with the weather than the old simple tricks of simply causing it to rain. They learned how to encourage cloud-formation; methods of diverting air-masses to create storms and high winds, and ways of setting cold fronts into motion. They kept

that knowledge quiet at that time because they weren't sure about the legal status of weather-control, and they didn't want to worry with complaints from farmers whose beans were nipped by frost.

"It was easy to convert gradually the big observatories into control-stations. Then we got to work to make the climate colder and stormier. It was hard to begin, but the nice thing about weather-control is that nature takes up the job after you've given her a hard shove in the right direction."

Dr. Dietrich paused and Carla's fingers stopped flying over the keyboard. "Is that enough?" he asked mildly.

"Yes. Sign it," Ted snapped. The scientist used a pen, then a heavy IWO seal.

TED FOLDED and pocketed the document. Then he took the IWO seal, unhooked the rear of the switchboard, and with the seal smashed the interior of the switchboard. A few feeble sparks flew, and Dr. Dietrich assumed a pained expression.

Taking the key from the door's lock, Ted motioned Carla outside. Standing at the door, he warned Dr. Dietrich: "Don't worry about being rescued. If they don't miss you, I'll come back and let you out after I've arranged for a government investigation of this place." He slammed shut the door and locked it from the outside.

Ted and Carla walked rapidly across the floor, calculating their chances. "He can't use that switchboard to signal," Ted said, "and maybe it wasn't a telephone switchboard anyway. I've never seen anything quite like its inside."

"I didn't like the calm way he took everything," Carla mused. "That thing he signed is dynamite; he must have something up his sleeve."

Again they went unmolested through the heavily laboring machinery, up the

elevator to the ground level, and back to the door through which they had entered. The little waiting room was still empty, and the guard was muttering feebly behind his gag.

Ted and Carla walked outside, and almost instantly loosened their clothing which they had buckled securely before leaving the building. It was almost pleasantly warm outside. The snowtaxi still stood at the side of the building.

They clambered in, and Ted got the snowtaxi into motion. It operated sluggishly, because the top layer of snow was thawing.

Drawing his bearings from the bright sun, Ted aimed for the railroad station. "We won't stop there," he explained, "because we'd be caught like sitting ducks if we got on a train. We'll follow the tracks in this thing until we come to a town, and I'll start telephoning people I know."

Ted shoved the throttle open another notch, as the vehicle slowed in the slush.

"Are there any oars in this thing?" Carla smiled. "I always did like canoeing."

Ted didn't answer. Carla plucked at his unbuttoned coat. "What's wrong?"

"I'm worried," he said, turning a grim face toward her. "This is low ground, and there are hills over in that direction. If it doesn't get colder soon..."

"You mean we can't climb the hills in this slush?"

"Worse than that. I'm afraid... duck!"

Ted pointed to a speck on the horizon behind them, and crouched low in the seat.

"A helicopter. They're looking for us." He jerked the vehicle to a stop in a puddle beside a dead tree. The helicopter grew bigger, then veered as it rose in the sky, and passed out of sight to their left.

"We'd better hurry," Carla suggested. "They're just as likely to spot us sitting as moving... What's wrong?"

TED WAS yanking desperately at the throttle. His feet danced on the foot-pedals.

"We're stuck," he muttered; "that's mud under us, not ice."

"I'll get out and try pushing."

"Sit still! Don't you see what's under us?"

Carla looked carefully over the vehicle's side. Where a puddle of water had stood only minutes before, a river-like current of icy water now rushed. The snowtaxi swayed a little from its tug.

"Here comes that plane again," Ted said. Carla ducked dutifully out of sight. Ted began to imitate her, then straightened and grabbed again at the controls of the snowtaxi.

The vehicle jolted wildly, then began to slide along. Carla relaxed for a moment, believing that Ted had gotten it to moving. Then her face whitened, as the rocking of the snowtaxi told her that it had merely broken loose and was floating along at the mercy of the current.

Ted fought for balance as the careening thing tried to throw him from the seat. His right arm encircled Carla, supporting her.

"Jump and swim!" she screamed.

"No use," he gasped. "We'd sink like shots in these coats. We'd freeze if we took them off and jumped in; that water's cold!"

Hanging to the wildly careening vehicle with one hand, Ted pulled from his pocket with the other revolver. Water was splashing into the seat beside them as he aimed into the air and pulled the trigger. Nothing happened. Desperately, he jerked again and again at the trigger.

The fourth time, the weapon fired. But instead of the report of a bullet-firing pistol, there was an uncanny whine and a bright ball of fire that emerged from the muzzle, soared high into the air, glowing redly even in the bright light of morning.

"You're aiming wrong!" Carla shouted, mistaking his intentions; "the helicopter's over that way."

"I'm not trying to hit anything. I

thought this might be a signal-pistol instead of a regular gun." He fired again and again, and three balls danced in the sky, close together.

The helicopter began to change direction, heading their way.

"Good thing we didn't try to shoot anyone with this," Ted remarked, almost light-hearted with rescue in sight.

But a scream from Carla answered him. Her face was a mask of terror and her hand shook as she pointed to a point just ahead of the drifting snow-taxi.

The snowfield fell away into a deep hollow that was now a frigid lake. The vehicle went noiselessly over the edge of the slope, half-fell, half-floated down the incline, and hit bottom with a titanic splash.

Water spurted through the bottom of the snowtaxi, like the bursting of a high-pressure hose. Ted threw both arms around Carla as the vehicle somersaulted and overturned.

THE ICY water into which they were thrown was like a slap in the face. Somehow Ted struggled to the surface, clinging desperately to Carla. She was limp until their heads rose above water, then began to kick and struggle like a madwoman, screaming hysterically. Ted felt her pulling him down.

He shook the water from his eyes, grabbed her hair with his left hand, and with his right fist, hit her on the jaw. She went limp.

Supporting her with one hand, Ted could have paddled to safety in normal conditions. But the heavy clothing was pulling him down like a weight, the current was moving them along at a dizzy pace, and the near-freezing temperature of the water was numbing Ted's fingers already.

He kicked desperately, praying that his feet might hit mud or ice on which he might stand and rest for a moment. But the new river was deep.

Twice his head went under the surface, and twice a trick of the current enabled him to come up for air. But

his breathing was labored, Carla's dead weight threatened to slip from his grasp, and things were growing dark around him.

There was a roaring in Ted's ears. Unable to see clearly, he attempted to unfasten his coat, get rid of its weight at all costs. The roaring was louder, and as he fumbled for the coat's fastenings, a snake slithered around his waist.

Ted clawed desperately at the snake. It tightened inexorably, pressing a vise-like grip around him, pushing the little breath left to him out of his body. There was nothing in Ted's universe but the numbing water, the grip around his waist, and the roar in his ears, with the automatic clutch of his arm around Carla.

Then the snake began to pull him upward toward the roar. Ted fought for breath, looked up, and saw through exhausted eyes the helicopter hovering overhead, a rope descending from it, and the loop of the rope around his body. Someone in the hold cautiously but steadily pulled Ted and Carla toward the helicopter.

AN HOUR later, wrapped in heavy blankets and sipping scalding coffee, Ted and Carla again faced Dr. Dietrich, this time in his living quarters at the observatory.

"It's all your own fault," he told Ted, without malice—merely explaining. "That switchboard happened to be the basic control-panel for the whole plant. When you wrecked it, our equipment went crazy; this all-out thaw got started before I could get out and alert the place."

"But why did you save our lives?" Ted asked bitterly. "You created misery for the whole world; you could have saved yourself some trouble by letting a couple more people drown."

"Now you're getting doubtful about us again," Dr. Dietrich chuckled. "You think we're evil, but you aren't so sure. As a matter of fact, we operate on the basic law of doing nothing that will cost lives. When we upset the

weather, it makes people uncomfortable and they keep busy trying to survive the cold and the storms; but we never make it so bad that they'll die."

"You admit that this is a conspiracy?" Carla asked.

"I wouldn't call it that," the official answered. "I kept trying to find a way to explain to you two and ask you to join us; but you were always in hot water, from the beginning to the end around here."

Ted laughed hollowly at the thought of joining this outfit. Dr. Dietrich raised a finger toward him.

"Listen to me for a minute," the official insisted. "Haven't you ever heard of choosing between the lesser of two evils? That's what has been done, and the secrecy has been necessary to save the world from itself. Think back a few years. Isn't it true that there hasn't been a serious war since the climate started to get worse?"

Ted and Carla stared at him.

"About forty years ago, scientific organizations all over the world saw how their discoveries were being misused in war. The scientists decided to do something about it. They strengthened their organizations, to prevent the rest of the people from knowing precisely what was happening; then they messed up the weather, simply to give man something to do besides fight wars.

"When crops started to fail, and transportation got knocked out, the politicians and the generals couldn't fight wars; there was no way to move men and the soldiers were needed to produce food. The newspapers couldn't get one country upset about the actions of another country, because all the countries were too busy keeping warm and dry and fastening down the roof in the gales.

"Finally, we reached a point in

weather-control where we have a more direct control. If some nation decides to act belligerent, we simply clamp down fogs and gales on that country until it behaves."

DIETRICH smiled. "The governments know what we scientists are doing but they're helpless to do anything about it. If one of these weather stations were sabotaged, there are plenty of others to pinchhit. And our own weapon prevents the scientists from getting too dictatorial—if we make conditions too bad, we'll all starve or blow away.

"It's really the old story all over again. Give man something important to do, and he'll be too busy to fight his neighbor. We didn't have a Civil War in the United States until most of the continent had been explored and civilized. They're working on rocket-ships now; as soon as we get to Mars in them, colonizing that planet will keep earth people so busy that we can probably let the weather here go back to normal."

"I want to believe it," Ted said slowly, "but it sounds terribly wild."

"Then you can both come to work for us here," Dr. Dietrich said, "and learn the proof. You know more about the science already than a lot of the people at the station; and I've always wanted Carla back as my secretary."

The thaw was over outside, and snowflakes were again tapping at the window. Carla turned to Ted. "Let's stay," she proposed.

Dr. Dietrich turned and walked discreetly out of the room. Ted answered: "I think he's right. And I've just remembered some more of that poem, the second line. It goes:

*"Blow, blow, thou winter wind,
'Thou art not so unkind....'"*

